

under the Scheme during previous years. The XI Finance Commission has also recommended an allocation of Rs. 502.90 crore for setting up of 1,734 additional courts which are expected to clear about 2 million criminal cases during 2001-2005.

Periodically matter is taken up with the State Governments regarding judicial reforms concerning them and the grant of more financial powers to the respective High Courts. Most of the State Governments have taken steps for judicial reforms. Some of the State Governments like Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Sikkim, etc. have delegated more financial powers to their respective High Courts.

Mandatory use of Electronic Voting Machine

1813. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government are considering to make mandatory use of Electronic Voting Machine and Identity Cards in the forth coming election as part of comprehensive poll reforms;
- (b) if so, the details of the proposals finalised and the financial implications thereof and the time frame for implementation;
- (c) whether the reform proposals have been discussed with the State Governments/National and Regional Political Parties and if so, their reaction to the proposals; and
- (d) the present status of Electoral Reforms?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY):

- (a) No, Sir.
- (b) and (c) Do not arise.
- (d) The Government is committed to bring necessary reforms in electoral laws pertaining to election to Parliament and legislatures of the States. The President also, in his Address to the Parliament, at the commencement of the first session after constitution of the 13th Lok Sabha, had stressed the necessity of bringing comprehensive reforms in the electoral laws of the country as priority subject for the present Government. In view of the political instability

and repeated General Elections, no important and concrete action has been possible after the last batch of electoral reforms in 1996 [The Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 1996] except for some piecemeal measures, like expanding the category of employees to be enrolled for election duties [The Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 1998] and making provisions for postal ballot facility for migrant voters [The Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 1999]. The Government is working out modalities for enacting a fresh batch of electoral reforms. It intends to bring very soon a Bill seeking to extend the current constitutional embargo on undertaking fresh delimitation of electoral constituencies upto the year 2026 AD, a consensus in respect of which was arrived at in the meeting of political parties held on 13.5.2000. Further, with a view to enable the members of the armed forces to exercise their right of franchise effectively at elections as the present option available to them to vote in person or through the system of postal ballot has not proved effective due to their posting in distant and remote places and other various reasons, the Government has decided to provide an additional option to them to vote through the system of proxy at elections. A Bill, namely the **Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 1999**, was accordingly introduced in the Lok Sabha on 9.12.99 which stands referred to the Department related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs for examination and report. The other proposals on electoral reforms are, however, still in the process of taking concrete shape. Electoral reforms are an ongoing process and can be carried out only after evolving political consensus. The Government intends to continue interaction with political parties on various proposals to carry forward the process of electoral reforms.

Safety measures for Water Transport

1814. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that water transport during rainy seasons proves to be fatal and a large number of people are killed in boat capsizes;
- (b) what measures are being taken by Government for safe water transport; and
- (c) whether it is under consideration of Government to provide the boatmen with electric motor boats at cheaper rates?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE